

178 contemporary material and intellectual culture which culmi-
 439 nates in their conversion to Christianity under Roman or
 Byzantine auspices. It likewise witnessed an expansion of trade
 both in Central Europe and in the Orient, and in this com-
 mercial expansion the Slavs in general had a definite stake.

764 Though a combined evaluation of linguistic, source, and
 archaeological data permits a tolerably accurate and convinc-
 ing appraisal of the material culture of the Slavs during the
 pagan period, there is no such coherent mass of evidence upon
 which any wholly satisfactory statement of their religious be-
 liefs, demonology, and eschatology may be predicted. The early
 Slavs cremated their dead, sharing this custom with their other
 Indo-European neighbors (Lithuanians, Germans, Celts). Bur-
 ial was adopted through foreign influence, and before the
 774 various conversions both customs existed side by side. The
 776 primitive pagan Slavs were animists and attributed a soul to
 775 the natural elements in which they lived. They honored a su-
 [782] preme deity and also believed in the existence of wood, water,
 and household spirits to which they offered sacrifices. Beside
 these nature spirits, they also honored the spirits of their an-
 821 cestors and thus believed in a future life. They deified the
 heavenly bodies and the great phenomena of nature (thunder,
 lightning, wind, rain, fire).

776 Beside these animistic and manistic beliefs, the pagan Slavs
 also venerated a limited number of gods, some of which were
 of alien origin. The organization of a veritable pantheon was
 carried farthest by the Western Slavs who lived along the Baltic
 coast, a phenomenon perhaps not unconnected with Germanic
 influences of early date. It is reasonably clear that all the
 primitive Slavs possessed a god of the thunder and lightning,
 though this deity, Perun, took on special importance among
 the Russian Slavs because of special Scandinavian influences
 and the importance of Thor in the Scandinavian pantheon.
 Among the Western Slavs, however, Perun was less dominant
 than the god of the shining sun, Svarog, a name apparently con-
 nected with the indo-European base *suar, signifying "heat,

851 so he may be considered able to receive the divine gifts in Communion. His dawning consciousness is trained to accept the privilege of meeting the other world as it there breaks through into this. When he is seven years old he is expected to make his first Confession, as he learns another side to the matter—his own unworthiness and responsibilities.

755 Nor does the care of the Church for the individual cease with his physical death, though it is much concentrated upon that moment. In cases of grave sickness (though not only *in articulo mortis*) or in view of some special risk of death, the devout Orthodox may be the recipient of the Sacrament of Holy Unction, and be anointed, with prayers for his recovery or safety. The long service is abbreviated in practice.

• 764 When a death occurs the house will be visited, even on three successive days by the priest and the prescribed service said in the presence of the body. The actual funeral service in Church is penetrated by the sense of the pathos of this life and of hope in the life to come. It contains passages of incomparable beauty, such as the first of the *ideomela* of St. John Damascene:

“What delight of life continueth unmixed with sorrow? What glory on earth remaineth unalterable? All things are more fleeting than a shadow, all things are more illusive than dreams; one moment, and all these things are succeeded by Death. But in the light of Thy countenance, and in the sweetness of Thy beauty, do Thou, O Christ, in mercy, give rest to *him* whom Thou hast chosen, forasmuch as Thou art the lover of mankind.¹

765 And the Church's pastoral care for the devout believer reaches out to him beyond the grave. There are ceremonies
776 prescribed for the eighth and the fortieth day after death as well as for the anniversary. For according to popular belief the soul does not bid a final farewell to this world until forty days after death, the interval having been spent in visiting the scenes of its earthly life, and even Mt. Athos and Jerusalem.

¹ See a translation of the Burial Service published by Douglas Pepler, Ditchling, 1922, and with the above quotation of No. 360 in *The English Hymnal*.